

LESSON 3 - "LIFE ON THE HOMESTEAD"



ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What combination of factors both natural and manmade is necessary for healthy river restoration and how does this enhance the sustainability of natural and human communities?

GUIDING QUESTION:

What was the life of a homesteader like and what tools from today would make their lives simpler?

LESSON OVERVIEW:

After reading articles, as a class, students will brainstorm how living in 1890 was different than living today in the 21st century. Students will examine photographs of homesteads on the Olympic peninsula and complete a graphic organizer. Students will write a short essay to describe a homestead then choose something from today that would be useful to an 1890 homesteader and explain why.

TIME NEEDED:

One 45-50 minute class

MATERIALS:

- Access to photographs of homesteaders.
- Articles
 - Homesteading
 - Claims
 - Daily Life
- Graphic Organizer:
 - **Life on the Homestead Photographs**
 - **Life on the Homestead Photographs** teacher master
- Photograph Information
- Journal

PROCEDURES:

1. Have students read 3 articles from the Olympic Peninsula Community Museum.
2. Discuss what would be different about living in 1890 compared to today.
3. Have students look at photographs of homesteads on the Olympic peninsula.
4. Students will complete the graphic organizer "Life on the Homestead"
5. Students will write a paragraph in their journal to describe one of the homesteads. In a second paragraph have them describe what they think the homesteader would most like to have from this century on the homestead. If you have a pre-discussion before the writing assignment get students to expand on initial answers to get to larger concepts. For example, if students mention an electronic device such as a TV, DVD, etc. guide the discussion to what makes those items operate: electricity and/or batteries and what else could be gained with those larger ideas. Other examples: medicine, indoor plumbing, telephone, etc.

ASSESSMENTS:

- Journal entry: a description of a homestead including what materials were used for construction (walls, roof, doors, etc.), what could be seen inside the cabin, and a general description of the setting of a homestead. The second paragraph of the journal entry should include something useful from the 21st century and an explanation of why it would be useful for a homesteader.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND ENRICHMENT:

WASHINGTON STATE STANDARDS:

SOCIAL STUDIES:

1. **EALR 3: GEOGRAPHY** - The student uses a spatial perspective to make reasoned decisions by applying the concepts of location, region, and movement and demonstrating knowledge of how geographic features and human cultures impact environments.
 - a. **Component 3.2:** Understands human interaction with the environment.

VOCABULARY:

- **Cedar shakes:** In North America shakes and shingles are typically made from Western Red Cedar. Shakes are split into 24 inch lengths, the most common length, 18 inch lengths, and 48 inch lengths (used for siding).
- **Cedar shingles:** Shingles are sawn on all sides in lengths of 15 inches, 18 inches and 24 inches. Shingles are commonly used on the roof.

Homesteaders and Pioneers on the Olympic Peninsula



HOMESTEADING

In the 1850s settlers began moving to the Olympic Peninsula and claiming land. Though beautiful, this northwest corner of America was isolated and difficult to homestead due to inhospitable weather and overwhelming forests. Under the Homestead Act of 1862, an individual could claim 160 acres of public land for a small fee. The homesteader received a title to the land if they lived on the land continuously and made certain improvements within 5 years, known as “proving up.” The Homestead Act required that applicants farm the land – a way of life which was better suited to the American plains than to the Olympic Peninsula, due to its soil conditions, rainy climate, and topography. Yet the fact that homesteaders came and often succeeded in proving up is a testament to the hope and determination of early emigrants.

Newspapers, the government, and other groups such as railroad companies and land speculators were interested in encouraging emigration. They praised the far west as a land of vast natural resources and opportunities. With its mild temperatures and plentiful rainfall, Washington was showcased in World’s Fairs as a farmer’s paradise. What early arrivals from the east actually found, however, was unsurveyed lands filled with immense trees and rugged mountains which lacked in roads, urban centers, and critical development in the form of schools, post offices, hospitals, or stores. The climate was indeed temperate, but obstacles to farming were many: clearing land of immense timber, poor soil drainage, rivers prone to flooding, difficulty in ripening of grain crops, and no marketplace to sell the crops which would grow.

Homesteaders and Pioneers on the Olympic Peninsula



CLAIMS

Homesteaders would begin their claim by building a small cabin. A small garden was created for the residents to grow food. Settlers then set about clearing land to grow crops, which might include grasses, clovers, timothy, root crops such as potatoes, hops, apples, wheat, and strawberries.

Removing stumps was difficult. Most homesteaders kept a few animals. Barns and outbuildings were built in varying numbers and sizes, depending on the tenacity of the homesteader.

Native tribes of the region, though frustrated by the treaty experience and U.S. land policy, were generally friendly and cooperative, providing help to settlers with transportation and labor.

A rather small proportion of the homesteaders succeeded in proving up, and an even smaller proportion stayed on their land for long afterwards. "Besieged by dense woods to clear, difficult terrain, heavy rainfall that limited crops, "no markets, no roads, no trail," and a diet of "spuds, elk, and sauerkraut," few succeeded as the self-sufficient farmer.

Homesteaders and Pioneers on the Olympic Peninsula



DAILY LIFE

Daily life on a homestead was centered on hard work. In addition to raising children and the maintenance of the hearth and home, the work of farming and expanding the claim was ever-present. Modernization was late in coming to the Olympic Peninsula, but eventually washing machines, telephones, and electricity were installed. Children went to primary and secondary schools if one was available, and most settlements were able to provide them. Holidays, dances, sporting contests, and other community events provided the opportunity to socialize and come together with people who shared the challenge of living in this remote corner of the country. Travel between settlements was by

trail and/or canoe, with small ferries operating on Lake Crescent.

People needed to get together occasionally to help each other, have some fun, and build community. Sporting events, dances, political meetings, and holidays gave the homesteaders a chance to relax and an excuse to socialize. Hunting and fishing served the dual purpose of recreation and providing meat for subsistence. It was sometimes a long walk to get to participate in social gatherings, but settlers readily made such trips to alleviate their isolation.

Many, if not most, homesteaders needed to spend some amount of time away from their claim so that they could earn the cash needed to buy necessities. Jobs taken were varied – loggers, U.S. Forest Rangers, mail carriers, miners, fishermen, packers, guides, bounty hunters, hired hands – whatever jobs were available in the area.

Often homesteaders would leave their wives and children on the claim to continue farming and return at the end of the working season, because the law required continuous residency. However it was hard to prove whether residency requirements were strictly obeyed.

Life on the Homestead Photographs		Name
View photographs to complete the graphic organizer.		
Focus question	Response	Photograph #
List what you see in the homes.		
List what you see outside the homes.		
What can be learned from what the homesteaders owned?		
What materials were used to build the homes?		

How could the homesteader earn money?		

Life on the Homestead Photographs teacher master		Name
View photographs to complete the graphic organizer.		
Focus question	Response	Photograph #
List what you see in the homes.	lamp, newspaper , wooden table, wooden chairs, bed , basket	11
	various grocery items, pots and pans, cooking stove, rifle	11
List what you see outside the homes.	outhouse, wild game, furs, livestock, antlers, tents	8,7,1,9,1,4
	trees, rivers or streams, fences, gardens, pets	(1,10),4,5,5, (7,1)
	wash tub, tools, wooden boxes, pans, lantern	3,(6,2) ,2,2,2
What can be learned from what the homesteaders owned?	hard work was required to exist	2,3,9
	electricity was unavailable (no TV or video games)	2,3
	some furniture was homemade	2, 3
	people read books for information and enjoyment	2,11
	clothes were washed by hand	3

	wood was used for heating and cooking	11
	meals were homemade	2
What materials were used to build the homes?	wooden planks, logs	(1,6), (2,4,9)
	cedar shakes(roof)	1,4,5,6,7,8,9,10
	cedar shingles	7,8,10
How could the homesteader earn money?	sell vegetables, fruit,	5,5&10
	cut firewood, planks or shakes, hire out to cut trees	4, 6
	pack, guide, deliver mail, sell furs/hides	9,9, 9,1



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8



PIONEERS OF THE OLYMPICS, CLALLAM CO. WASH.
R. WISCHMEYER SEATTLE WASH. 169

Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11

PHOTOGRAPH INFORMATION

- **Figure 1:** Description: Mary Brooks at her log cabin in Piedmont, Lake Crescent, with her sons Ed and Harry Brooks.
Collection: Norman Brooks
- **Figure 2:** Description: "Welpton at Primrose camp."
Photograph of man sitting on front porch of cabin skinning potatoes in bucket.
Collection: Grant W. Humes
Title: Primrose camp
- **Figure 3:** Description: Black and white photograph of Crisler washing clothes in small bucket outside the Humes cabins.
Collection: Crisler
Title: Crisler washing clothes
- **Figure 4:** Description: Photograph of cabin and barn with man, dog next to river. Probably Elwha River.
Collection: Grant W. Humes
- **Figure 5:** Description: Black and white photograph of the Crisler cabin.
Collection: Crisler collection
Title: fenced garden.
- **Figure 6:** Description: Cabin.
Collection: March Morris collection
Title: Cabin
- **Figure 7:** Description: Herd of deer grazing in a yard with cabin in the background.
Collection: March Morris Collection
Title: Deer in the Yard
- **Figure 8:** Description: Privy at Michael's Cabin
Collection: Historic structures
- **Figure 9:** Description: "Pioneers of the Olympics, Clallam County, Washington." Man standing with two pack *horses in a field with a building in the background.
Collection: Taylor Collection
Title: Pack Horses
Photographer: P. Wischmeyer
*both pack animals in the photograph are mules
- **Figure 10:** Description: Homestead with out buildings and newly planted trees.
Collection: March Morris Collection
Title: Homestead Site
- **Figure 11:** Description: Mrs. Theo. F. Rixon (standing) in her homestead home "Fairholme" Lake Crescent about 1898 or 1899
Collection: Polly Polhamus
Title: Mrs. Theo.F.Rixon standing in her homestead home